

JIM C – SPORTS TERMS

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HOW DID THE TERM “*BULLPEN*” ORIGINATE?

Definition: Baseball term for area where relief pitchers warm up.

Online Etymology: 1915 in *Baseball Magazine* from *bull* + *pen*; perhaps from slang "temporary holding cell for prisoners" (1809).

By 1903, O. Henry was using the term to refer to any waiting area. Perhaps the generic term for waiting area simply became a more specialized term when applied to baseball.

Oxford English Dictionary: The earliest recorded use of "bullpen" in baseball is in a 1924 *Chicago Tribune* article from October 5th.

Theory #1: In the 1870s after the game had started, tickets would be sold at a discount. These late arriving fans with cheap tickets would be herded into a roped-off, standing-room-only area in foul territory like cattle – thus the area was known as the “*bullpen*.”

Theory #2: Around the turn of the 20th century relievers would warm up near the outfield fence showing *bull durham tobacco* signs. The picture of the bull then became associated with the pitchers, who were usually the largest and strongest on the team.

C.W.: Bullpen = Home to relief pitchers; warm-up area

Zen: The bullpen is a staging area in baseball for the next act